

**EDITOR'S PAGE**

## Reflections

There are seminal moments in every life that mark milestones in achieving lifetime goals. These are times during which we reflect on the course we have followed to accomplish our ultimate objective, and the potential that that realization holds for the future. For some it is graduation, for others it is parenthood or a major professional success. Whatever the event, the reflection usually consists of a mixture of happiness, pride, humility, and emotion.

As physicians, many of these seminal moments involve our careers in medicine. I do not think we take the time to reflect upon these events as often and as seriously as we should. In my over 40 years as a physician I have been very fortunate to have had several such occasions. Recently, we opened the Sulpizio Family Cardiovascular Center at the University of California—San Diego (UCSD), a facility for which I was privileged to serve as the Founding Director. This was clearly a seminal event in my life, and I was asked to present a few remarks at the opening gala. This presentation was transcribed, and I thought that I would share it with you as an example of the reflection of one physician upon the ultimate achievement of a 15-year-long goal. The following presentation has, of course, been edited for grammar and syntax.

“It is said that a good idea has many parents, but an idea that is not successful is an orphan. The Sulpizio Family Cardiovascular Center (CVC) was and is a great idea, and so it has many, many parents.

I would like to tell you a story.

There was a window. It was an ordinary window, nothing special. In fact, it was on the back side of the Thornton hospital on a hallway by the catheterization laboratory where few people traveled. The window really did not have much of a view; it looked out on the doctors' parking lot.

And, it was in the earliest days of the CVC, when it was little more than an idea. We all knew that in order to be successful we would have to recruit supporters: individuals who were successful, wise, and who cared deeply about cardiovascular disease; individuals who would share our passion and give us sage advice.

So, when potential supporters were identified, I would take them on a tour of our La Jolla cardiac facilities. We would begin in the area housing clinics and noninvasive testing, and then I would take them to see the fabulous patient rooms in the Thornton hospital. Sometimes we would go across Interstate 5 to visit the productive basic science laboratories and talented researchers, and sometimes we would stick our heads in the catheterization laboratory to see a procedure. But always, always, we would end our tour at that window in the back hallway of the hospital. And, as we looked out on the doctors' parking lot, I would tell them that someday, if we were successful, that would be the location of the CVC. Then, I would ask them to imagine a structure that brought together all those working in cardiovascular disease to make a whole greater than the sum of the parts.



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Now, if we were to go to that window and look out today, we would see the finished CVC, and it is magnificent. We would see a building that houses the clinics, operating rooms, and intensive care units that will enable us to give the best leading-edge clinical care possible, and all in one place. We would see the facilities that will make possible innovation and translational research bringing new discoveries to patients. We could visualize the next generation of cardiovascular specialists who will be trained at the CVC to replace us, truly our greatest lasting gift to medicine.

So, this is a special evening, a very special evening. And, as each of you out there who have shared the parenthood of the CVC think back on this journey and its ultimate accomplishment, you will all have your own recollections. But for me personally, what I will remember most is standing before that window, looking out on the parking lot, and imagining the cardiovascular center that might one day be built there. And now, seeing the completed center has caused me to learn, or I should say relearn, a lesson we constantly teach our children: if you

have a noble goal, work hard, and persevere, your wildest dreams can become a reality. Tonight my wildest dreams have become a reality. Thank you all so very much."

Now, I know that the CVC at UCSD is not the only such center in the world, or even the biggest, and that most readers may not have a burning interest in what is occurring in La Jolla. But I offer the above to you as an example of a seminal event in the life of one physician, an occurrence that produced a period of deep reflection. It does not seem that we physicians slow down enough to consider or appreciate what we have accomplished. I cannot recall having stepped back and reviewed an undertaking in this way in the past. However, I intend to do so in the future, and I urge all of you to do the same.

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